Timber Supply Review Backgrounder

* Throughout this document, an asterisk at the end of a phrase or word indicates that a definition can be found in the margin.

Timber supply

The amount of timber that is forecast to be available for harvesting over a specified time period, under a particular management regime.

Timber supply area

An integrated resource management unit established in accordance with *Section 7* of the *Forest Act*.

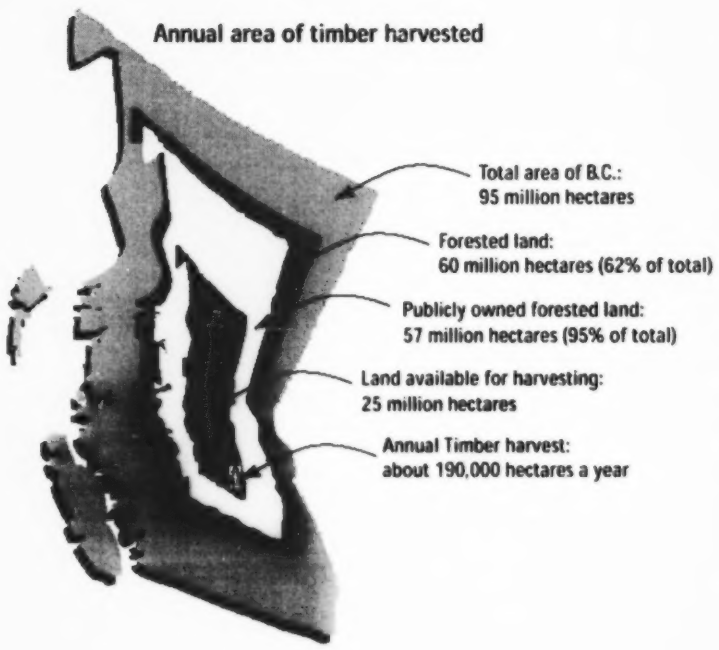
Timber Supply Review

The timber supply review program began in 1992 to update timber supply* regularly in each of the 37 timber supply areas* (TSAs) and 34 tree farm licences* (TFLs) throughout the province. Determining the allowable annual cut* (AAC) for public forest lands in B.C. is the responsibility of the province's chief forester. By law, in British Columbia the AAC for each TSA and TFL must be determined at least once every five years.

The main objectives of the timber supply review are:

- To identify the economic, environmental and social information that reflects current forest management practices—including their effects on short- and long-term timber supply;
- To identify where improved information is required for future timber supply forecasts;
- To provide the chief forester with information to use when making AAC determinations that will apply for the next five years.

The second round of the timber supply review was completed in 2002. Work is now under way on the third round of the review.


Annual area of timber harvested
Total area of B.C.:
95 million hectares
Forested land:
60 million hectares (62% of total)
Publicly owned forested land:
57 million hectares (95% of total)
Land available for harvesting:
25 million hectares
Annual Timber harvest:
about 190,000 hectares a year

Why the timber supply review is necessary

Before the program began in 1992, frequent review of the timber supply in TSAs and TFLs was not required. As a result, in many cases AACs did not reflect new practices. In response, and to address widespread public concern that forests were being overcut, the government legislated the timber supply review under Section 8 of the *Forest Act*. Now by law, the chief forester must determine an AAC for each TSA and TFL at least once every five years.

The chief forester's role

Determining AACs for Crown forest land in B.C. is one of the chief forester's most important responsibilities because it affects local and provincial economies and the environment—now and in the future. In this lengthy and complex process, the chief forester considers technical reports, analyses and public input, as well as government's social and economic objectives.

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Tree farm licence

Provides rights to harvest timber, and outlines responsibilities for forest management, in a particular area.

Allowable annual cut

The rate of timber harvest permitted each year from a specified area of land, usually expressed as cubic metres of wood per year.

This responsibility is required by legislation in the *Forest Act*, Section 8. It states that the chief forester shall specifically consider the following factors:

1. The rate of timber production that may be sustained from the area, taking into account:
   - the composition of the forest and its expected rate of growth
   - the time that it will take the forest to become re-established
   - silviculture treatments, including reforestation
   - standards of timber utilization
   - constraints on the amount of timber that may be produced due to use of the forest for other purposes.
2. The short- and long-term implications to the province of alternative rates of timber harvesting from the area.
3. The economic and social objectives of the government for the area, region and province, as expressed by the minister of forests.
4. Abnormal insect or disease infestations, and major salvage programs planned for the timber on the area.

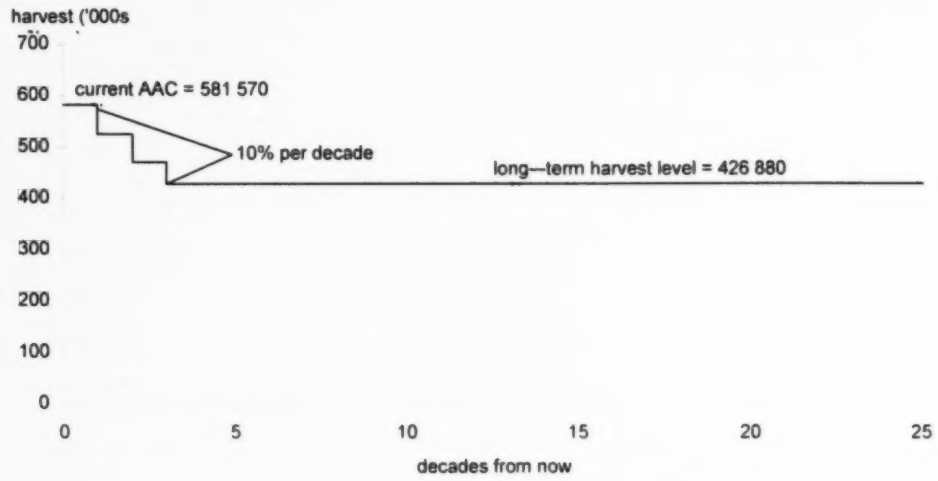
Some of these factors can be readily measured and analyzed while others cannot. Ultimately, the chief forester's determination is an independent professional judgment based on the best available information. By law, the chief forester is independent of the political process, and is not directed by the minister of forests when determining an AAC.

Why some AACs may be higher than the long-term harvest level

The first round of the timber supply review (1992-1996) indicated that the volume of timber harvested annually in B.C. was projected to decline by as much as 15 to 20 per cent over the next 60 years to the long-term harvest level. However, the review also indicated that in a number of areas the AAC was already at the long-term harvest level. Therefore, there could be opportunities to increase the AAC due to utilization of species or stands that were previously uneconomical to harvest, or due to better information about the forest resources.

In TSAs and TFLs where the long-term harvest level is significantly lower than the current AAC, the chief forester's strategy is gradually reduce the AAC in a managed transition

An example of a timber supply where the long–level is significantly lower than the current AAC: Invermere TSA, 2000



to the lower level over several decades, provided the long-term harvest level is not jeopardized. This is to allow communities that rely on the forest sector to avoid sudden economic disruptions and to plan for the future.

One reason why the long-term harvesting level is lower than the current AAC is that in the short term, harvesting takes place in older forests that have accumulated high timber volumes by growing for a long time. Future harvesting on the same sites will take place in second-growth forests at younger ages, often yielding lower volumes per hectare.

Factors affecting timber supply

It is not just the transition from older to second-growth forests that affects timber supply. The amount of timber a forested area produces depends also on the size and productivity of the timber harvesting land base*, the tree species growing there, and the way the forest is managed. Changes in land-use designations, management objectives and forest policies also affect timber supply. Examples are:

- Changing the management objectives for an area to maintain scenic values may reduce the timber available for harvesting or the rate at which harvesting may occur.
- Increasing the timber harvesting land base, or improving its productivity through treatments like fertilization can increase the amount of timber available for harvesting.
- Implementing new forest management guidelines for roads and harvesting may affect the availability of timber for harvesting.
- Harvesting some forests that were previously unprofitable may be feasible because the price of wood products has increased, thereby increasing timber supply.

The timber supply review process

Timber Supply Areas

In the current round of the timber supply review, the process for reviewing a TSA is expected to take about 16 months and includes the following steps:

1. The timber supply review process
2. *Data package:* This report describes the best available information on the current forest resources inventory and management practices in a given unit. This forms the basis of the timber supply analysis.
3. *60-day public review period:* The public is encouraged to provide comments on the draft data and management assumptions contained in the data package.
4. *Analysis report:* The analysis report provides a timber supply forecast for the next 250 years. The report includes sensitivity analyses that assess the impacts on timber supply of uncertainty in the information and assumptions. The report also reviews environmental factors, and considers socio-economic impacts of changes to the AAC.
5. *60-day public review period:* The analysis report is made available to the public including First Nations groups for review and comment.
6. *AAC determination:* The chief forester determines an AAC for the TSA and releases a rationale statement and summary of public input.

Tree Farm Licences

While the legal mandate and guiding principles for determining AACs for TFLs and TSAs are the same, the process for reviewing the management plans and AACs of TFLs has been designed to reflect the management responsibilities of TFL agreements. TFL licensees are responsible for preparing the management plan and timber supply analysis

Long-term harvest level

A harvest level that can be maintained indefinitely given a particular forest manage-ment regime.

Timber harvesting land base

Crown forest land within the timber supply area where timber harvesting is considered both acceptable and economically feasible, given objectives for all relevant forest values, existing timber quality, market values and applicable technology.

The B.C. Forest Service and other agencies are responsible for reviewing and accepting all components at various stages. The process for reviewing a TFL takes about 20 months and includes the following steps:

1. *Management plan review:* A review of the current management plan and presentation of the draft management plan for public comment.

2. *Information package:* Data and management assumptions that will be used in the timber supply analysis.

3. *Timber supply analysis and 20-year plan:* The analysis report provides a timber supply forecast for the next 250 years and produces what are called sensitivity analyses, which assess the effects of any uncertainty in the inventory information and management practices. The report also reviews environmental factors, and considers socio-economic impacts of changes to the AAC.

4. *AAC determination:* The chief forester determines an AAC for the TFL, releases a rationale statement and approves a new management plan

Public involvement in the timber supply review

Public involvement and comment are important components of the timber supply review. During the processes for TSAs and TFLs there are opportunities for the public to attend meetings, review reports and provide public input that the chief forester considers in his AAC determination.

A commitment to incorporate change

The *Forest Act* requires the chief forester to determine the AAC for each TSA and TFL at least once every five years to ensure the AACs are current and reflect new information, new practices and new government policies. Under the *Act*, the chief forester can, under certain circumstances, postpone his determination if he considers that the AAC is unlikely to change significantly. The implementation of major government measures such as the new *Forest and Range Practices Act* and land and resource management plans may impact timber supply in specific TSAs and TFLs. In these cases, the chief forester may decide to determine the AACs more frequently than every five years.

To learn more about the Timber Supply Review process please visit the Ministry of Forests, Forest Analysis and Inventory Branch website at:
http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hts/

or contact:

Forest Analysis and
Inventory Branch
Ministry of Forests and Range
P.O. Box 9512,Stn.Prov.Govt.
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 9C2

Tel: (250) 356-5947
Fax: (250) 953-3838